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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUKAN (Slovakia)

later: Mrs. Al-HAMANI (Yemen)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Mr. BUNCH (Chief, Programme and Documentation Planning Section, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), referring to the submission of reports and draft resolutions, invited members to refer to General Assembly decision 47/432, in particular, annex I, section E, and annex II.

2. Under the current programme of work, which had been in effect since the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Committee followed two parallel procedures. He drew a distinction between (i) the documentation to be submitted to the Third Committee in 1993 and 1994 as specified in annex II of decision 47/432; those documents were to be issued pursuant to mandates emanating from various draft resolutions; and (ii) matters on the Third Committee's agenda, listed in annex I, section E of decision 47/432, regarding which the Committee was to consider a draft resolution at its current session, on either an annual or biennial basis.

3. The two procedures normally should perfectly coincide, i.e., any document before the Third Committee should be accompanied by a draft resolution. However, that was not always the case since, for example, certain reports were submitted annually but dealt with matters which, in accordance with the biennial programme of work, were to be the subject of a draft resolution only every two years, as was the case for the report of the Committee against Torture and the report on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Racial Discrimination, neither of which would be the subject of a draft resolution during the current session.

4. Towards the end of its work at the current session, the Third Committee would consider a draft programme of work for 1994-1995 prepared by the Secretariat containing the list of documents which it would have before it during those two years, as well as a dual list of issues that would be the subject of either annual or biennial draft resolutions. If the Committee wished a draft resolution to be submitted each year on an issue belonging to the biennial category in the programme of work for 1993-1994, it could take the appropriate decision when it considered its draft programme of work at the current session. He would be pleased to assist members of the Committee who had any doubts or hesitations on the question.

AGENDA ITEM 109: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/48/24, A/48/56-E/1993/6, A/48/207, A/48/289, A/48/291, A/48/293, A/48/462, A/48/476, A/48/484, E/1993/50/Rev.1, A/C.3/48/L.2-L.4)

5. Mrs. CLAESSON WATSBERG (Sweden), addressing the question of disabled persons, who were prevented by many barriers from exercising their human rights, said that it was at the European regional meeting on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons held at Ljubljana in March 1987, that the question of a convention on the rights of persons with

(Mrs. Claesson Watsberg, Sweden)

disabilities had been raised for the first time, by two women, one of whom was Swedish, a demonstration of her country's long-standing interest in the subject.

6. A primary objective of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons adopted by the General Assembly in 1982 and of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had been to establish the equality and full participation of disabled persons in society. Progress towards that end had been reviewed at the mid-point of the Decade at a meeting of international experts which had taken place at Stockholm in 1987 under the aegis of the United Nations and her Government. However, when the issue had been debated in 1987 in the General Assembly, delegations had failed to agree on the appropriateness of such a convention, for some feared that it would duplicate existing human rights instruments and that it would marginalize disabled persons. It was against that background that the draft Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities should be viewed. On the initiative of her country in the Economic and Social Council in 1990, an ad hoc open-ended working group of Government experts had been established for that purpose in 1991 by the Commission for Social Development. Her delegation called for the prompt adoption of those Rules by the General Assembly, for they would constitute a major step forward in the promotion of human rights and for progress in general.

7. However, while the Rules were fundamentally useful, there was a risk that the norms for men also might become the norm for women with disabilities. That was why gender-based statistical data were important. The living conditions of women with disabilities had received little attention at the Nairobi World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women held in 1985. They must not be forgotten in 1995. To that end, it was important to ensure that women with disabilities were included in the committees preparing for the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and in the national delegations participating in that Conference. The international development body of the Swedish disabled movement had established a working committee for women with functional impairments. A questionnaire had been circulated during 1993 to women in disabled persons' organizations in countries cooperating with that body in order to obtain a clearer picture of the situation of that group of women.

8. If they were to be effective, the Rules must include an implementation mechanism and an international monitoring system. The Commission for Social Development should regularly review progress made by Member States, identify obstacles and suggest measures to overcome them.

9. Now that the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was over, the problems of that group must not be viewed as a separate concern. It was important that they be integrated in all United Nations activities. The United Nations must elaborate concrete plans to integrate them in all relevant situations. Funds must be set aside to that end in the regular budget. The proposed Special Rapporteur was an important element of the follow-up process. It would be advantageous if the Rapporteur had personal experience with functional impairments. It was equally essential that the panel with which the Rapporteur was to cooperate included representatives of persons with disabilities and a sufficient number of women with disabilities.

(Mrs. Claesson Watsberg, Sweden)

10. A long-term strategy was needed to implement the Rules in a systematic manner. Work on the issue should proceed in a way that would enable the General Assembly to decide on such a strategy in 1994.

11. She drew attention to new legislation adopted by her country's Parliament in May 1993 concerning the right of persons with disabilities to personal assistance, i.e., the right to have an assistant accompany the functionally impaired person wherever he or she went and to provide that person with all necessary services. That measure was an important breakthrough, since it assured persons with disabilities independence, freedom of choice and privacy. That explained why her country would continue to insist on the need for the speedy adoption and implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

12. Mr. KONKOBO (Burkina Faso) said that social, economic and political changes and the process of democratization had brought social development, among other urgent global issues, to the forefront. None the less, the social landscape of the planet was eroding from year to year. The gap between developed and developing countries continued to widen, owing to the intransigence of the prosperous and the powerlessness of the underprivileged. Increasing inequalities were a source of social tension and conflict between and within individual nations. There would be no social harmony unless the economic imbalance was corrected in favour of the large majority of the world's population. Unfortunately, for the time being, there was no other solution for the developing countries but the painful therapy of structural adjustment programmes.

13. His delegation reiterated its message to the Second Committee at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, namely that the success of those programmes was, unfortunately, conditioned by an international economic situation that was unfavourable to the developing countries, the absence of actual foreign aid to those countries and the choice of a remedy by multilateral financial institutions without proper consultation of the countries concerned.

14. While his delegation recognized the recent concerted efforts of those institutions it entertained little hope that structural adjustment programmes would prove successful. The demands of well-being and development were indivisible. His delegation therefore supported the convening of a World Summit for Social Development in 1995 and appreciated the preparatory studies already under way on some of the major economic and social issues facing the international community: poverty, equity, social security and migration.

15. Turning to the issue of the family, an important element of social change, his country welcomed the celebration of the International Year of the Family and attached special interest to promoting the family, as witnessed by the introduction in 1990 of a new code on individuals and the family. In 1992, his Government had created an interministerial commission to organize the celebration of the International Year of the Family in 1994. A report on the relevant measures adopted had been sent to the appropriate authorities.

(Mr. Konkobo, Burkina Faso)

16. With regard to the issue of the elderly, considered to embody wisdom in Africa, since 1992 the Government office in charge of social welfare and the family had sought ways to preserve what had been achieved and to set national objectives with regard to the elderly. His delegation welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 47/86 on the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing aimed at integrating older persons in development.

17. The problems of youth were of particular concern in his country, where more than one half of the population was young. Young people there were considered an asset and a potential source of labour, but social and economic imbalances had upset former customs and eroded family relations. The breakdown of values, causing traditional solidarity to be replaced by individualism and the extended family by the family unit, had led to a moral decline and social disintegration marked by delinquency, prostitution, drug addiction, abandoned children and infanticide. Unemployment and illiteracy aggravated the distressing fate of the youth.

18. His country had adopted several measures to confront that situation, such as the establishment of a national employment fund and a fund to support production, which had made it possible in the past year to assist small and medium-sized businesses and to promote the socio-professional integration of young cadres. As a result, small farms had been established in the irrigated plains of the Sourou.

19. The completion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had brought with it greater awareness in his country of the problems of the disabled. The Government had begun to adopt social, economic and political measures, such as the issuing of invalidity cards entitling the bearer to various services. In that regard, he commended the efforts deployed by several NGOs in his country for the socio-professional integration of the disabled. His delegation welcomed the recommendation that all Member States should celebrate the International Day of Disabled Persons annually on 3 December.

20. In conclusion, his delegation emphasized that although the chances for social development in the developing countries had considerably declined, it refused to yield to pessimism.

21. Mr. SOTIROV (Bulgaria) said that United Nations programmes and strategies for development and national programmes of individual countries had given greater importance to social issues. However, illiteracy, hunger, homelessness and unemployment continued to prevail in many parts of the world. His delegation believed that social development issues had become truly global in scope and required international cooperation.

22. Emphasis should be placed on the interrelationship between economic and social development and other major global issues confronting mankind. There was no doubt, for instance, that the respect and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms contributed to social progress. In the area of reinforcing international security and resolving regional conflicts, it had been demonstrated that confrontation could give way to cooperation, and it would be

(Mr. Sotirov, Bulgaria)

preferable to see the same occur for social problems, which were no less important. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the decision to convene the World Summit for Social Development, which would indubitably contribute to international security and stability.

23. The reforms required for the transition to a market economy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe carried with them social problems that those countries could not hope to resolve without international support. Despite the introduction of social security policies in Bulgaria, reforms had very badly affected the most vulnerable groups of the population. His country believed, as emphasized in section C of chapter VI of the 1993 Report on the World Social Situation (E/1993/50), growing unemployment had become a major issue for policy makers in those countries. That problem had heavy psychological consequences, seen in the negative reaction of the population to a decline in their income and standard of living. In mid-1993, more than 14 per cent of the active population were jobless. Inflation, which in 1992 was at 80 per cent, would be at 65 per cent in 1993 and had had a negative impact on the system of social security, causing a decrease in expenditure for education and an increase in the price of medicines which had caused a drop in public spending for health care and a cut in social security benefits.

24. His country, aware of the need to impose sanctions to find a peaceful solution to situations that threatened international peace and security, was strictly applying the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Despite the recommendation of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia (S/26040) which recognized the need to assist Bulgaria in coping with the heavy losses that it had incurred as a result of the sanctions and which had caused social programmes to suffer, the country had still not received any financial or economic assistance from the international community. His delegation was therefore of the view that the fourteenth report on the world social situation should contain precise data regarding the impact of those sanctions on the social situation of Member States that were most affected by their application.

25. Bulgaria attached particular importance to international cooperation aimed at enhancing the role of women in social, economic and political life. The Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995, would make it possible to review currently adopted strategies.

26. His delegation welcomed the decisions contained in resolution 45/91 on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. Bulgaria, which had more than 230,000 disabled persons, had instituted a national programme in 1985, and long-term programmes had been adopted at the municipal level. NGOs, in particular the Blind Union, the Federation of the Deaf, and the Union of the Disabled, had been especially active in that area. He pointed out that the 1993 World Games for Deaf People had been held in Sofia.

27. Bulgaria supported the Proclamation on Ageing (resolution 47/5) and the Implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing (resolution 47/86). It endeavoured to create fair conditions for retirees, who made up 30 per cent of the population.

(Mr. Sotirov, Bulgaria)

28. His delegation applauded the policies and programmes involving youth (resolution 47/85). Owing to the fact that unemployment hit that sector of the population especially hard, since 1989 400,000 persons, for the most part young and skilled, had left the country to seek better economic conditions elsewhere. In addition to official bodies, such as the newly created Committee for Youth and Sports, there were also a number of NGOs that were addressing the problems of youth in Bulgaria.

29. Bulgaria was preparing to observe the 1994 International Year of the Family. A National Coordinating Committee, made up of representatives from all the governmental bodies and NGOs, had been set up to prepare, observe and ensure the follow-up of the Year.

30. Ms. FENG CUI (China) said that the status of social development throughout the world remained grim, especially in the developing countries. In the light of the regional and national wars and conflicts, the social chaos and instability, the economic and political crises, the poverty, unemployment, famine and disease, which were in turn causing displacements and migrations, in the light, also, of the unfair economic competition, the excessive debt burden, the foreign intervention and catastrophes, both natural and man-made, the international community must make social development issues its immediate priority. Social problems, which were inseparable from economic and social progress, could endanger stability, peace and development in the world. The international community had of course scored successes, and the United Nations had done useful and encouraging work. A considerable number of activities undertaken by the United Nations had, however, registered slow progress, owing, among other things, to a lack of adequate funds.

31. Under resolution 47/92 the General Assembly had resolved to convene, in 1995, a World Summit for Social Development. At its thirty-third session (1993), the Commission for Social Development had made an in-depth study of the three core issues - poverty, unemployment and social integration - which were to be the focus of the Summit. Furthermore, during the high-level debate of the Economic and Social Council in 1993, many delegations had put forward concrete proposals for ensuring the success of the Summit. China, which was actively engaged in the preparations, wished to make the following suggestions. Firstly, the Summit should focus upon the serious economic and social issues facing the developing countries. Secondly, in order to tackle social development issues, a peaceful and stable international environment must be created and maintained, and an equitable new international economic order must be established. Thirdly, all Governments should strengthen their leadership capacity in the field of social development, and should supervise the coordination of social and economic aspects. Fourthly, a policy of equitable distribution of resources should be followed in the field of social development, and Governments should be considered duty-bound to provide basic guarantees to all members of society. Fifthly, effective, fair and comprehensive international cooperation, based upon equality and mutual benefit and respect, must be launched. Linking cooperation to preset conditions, interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and politicizing social development questions should be avoided. Sixthly, the United Nations should accord priority to developing countries, so as to narrow

(Ms. Feng Cui, China)

the North-South gap. The developed countries should, for their part, undertake a greater number of obligations. Seventhly, the Summit should, on the basis of intensive discussions, formulate solutions as well as measures for their implementation. The Chinese Government, convinced that social development was both the starting-point and the final objective of economic development, was focusing its efforts on that sector, and had succeeded to date in feeding and clothing the great majority of its 1.1 billion citizens. In the process, it paid great attention to the legitimate rights and interests of youth, women, children, older persons and disabled persons and endeavoured to improve their well-being by adopting relevant legislation. In the previous five years, 1.26 million disabled persons had been reintegrated into society and 1.4 million had found employment. A National Coordination Committee on the disabled had recently been established, the responsibility of which was the coordination of policy guidelines and rules governing their implementation. On 6 October, the Chinese Federation for Disabled Persons had held its second National Conference, with the active support of the Government, and had formulated, for the coming five years, general development objectives on behalf of the disabled.

32. China, which enjoyed political stability and economic development, was prepared to lend its support to the work of the United Nations in the area of social development, through enhanced cooperation and exchanges, in the belief that it would thereby contribute to the development and progress of mankind.

33. Ms. ARIAS (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Three (Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela), stressed that the question of social development had been addressed on many occasions in 1993, for example, at the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development and the high-level debate of the Economic and Social Council, at the international level, and at the third Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held at Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, in July, at the regional level. Illustrating the priority placed by the countries of the Group of Three on improving the social situation throughout the world and searching for solutions to the world-wide economic and social crisis, she also cited the Conference on Social Development and Poverty held in Mexico, the Latin America and the Caribbean Preparatory Meeting for the International Year of the Family, held at Cartagena, Colombia, in August, and the VIIIth World Congress on Family Law, which was scheduled to be held in Caracas, Venezuela, in November 1994.

34. The United Nations ran the risk of seriously compromising its mandate (which was to serve the cause of peace, development and security), if it failed to demonstrate that it was capable of devising a strategy for the elimination of misery, poverty and unemployment, and for the construction of a society in which human welfare was the principal objective. At the high-level debate of the Economic and Social Council, it had been widely acknowledged that an effort must be made to enhance quality of life within the context of a broader conception of freedom. That consensus should lead to concrete action at the national, regional and multilateral levels, as well as to international support for national plans of action.

(Ms. Arias, Colombia)

35. The fact that a World Summit for Social Development had been convened for the first time bespoke the urgency of the situation. The gap between developed and developing countries was deepening, condemning millions to poverty. In the developed countries, the economic recession had had serious social consequences: increased unemployment, marginalization, mounting crime and drug addiction. Each country should adopt a social strategy incorporating its own situation as well as the international context, and combining the efforts of official bodies and the private sector. The third Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government had emphasized the function of the State, which was not solely to stimulate development but to promote social justice. That social responsibility lay not only with the State but with the society as a whole; and the well-being of the people was the guarantee of social stability. Although the social programmes conducted in the countries of the Group of Three had yielded positive results, problems persisted, especially in the areas of poverty, income distribution and social services.

36. As part of the restructuring of the United Nations, the economic and social sectors must be strengthened in order to restore the balance between development objectives, peace and democracy. The Secretary-General had noted in his report on the work of the Organization (A/48/1) that it was impossible to consolidate peace and democracy without development. It was therefore essential to adopt a development agenda, enhance coordination among the social and economic bodies and establish genuine consultations with the other Bretton Woods institutions. The Secretariat must be modernized, publish the documents for the deliberative bodies on time and propose new ideas that would help to consolidate a new world order where the basic requirements of the population would be met. It would be better to devote the Organization's human and financial resources to coordinating international cooperation for development rather than to preparing superfluous reports such as the 1993 Report on the World Social Situation (E/1993/50), a voluminous and repetitive document that reproduced information that was either known already or had not been verified.

37. The preparatory meeting for the International Year of the Family for Latin America and the Caribbean had adopted by consensus a plan of action and a series of recommendations aimed at improving the well-being of the family. The three countries had undertaken, with a view to the International Year of the Family, which would begin in January 1994, to review and update their legislation on the protection of the rights of the family and the elimination of any discrimination against the family and to strengthen national programmes to satisfy the basic needs of the family, particularly in the areas of health care, education, nutrition, sanitation, housing and employment. Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela intended to participate actively in 1994 in the substantive meetings of the preparatory committee for the World Summit for Social Development and in the other regional meetings and meetings on specific items organized as part of the preparations for the Summit.

38. Mr. JAEGER (Austria) said that the international community's growing awareness of social development problems was reflected by the many international meetings and events devoted to those questions: the proclamation of 3 December 1993 as the International Day of Disabled Persons, the observance of

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an International Day of the Families (1994), the holding of an International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the convening of a World Summit for Social Development (1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (1995) and the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (1995). Moreover, a Conference of European Ministers responsible for Social Affairs had been held at Bratislava (28 June-2 July 1993) and at Geneva (28-30 June 1993), the Economic and Social Council had held high-level discussions devoted to the preparation of the World Summit for Social Development.

39. Concerning the World Summit for Social Development, th777e European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna, which was 777affiliated to the United Nations, had prepared the basic documents for the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Social Affairs. That document, which could contribute to the preparations for the World Summit, dealt primarily with the situation in Europe, in particular countries with economies in transition, analysed social policies in force, international migration and migration policies and the intensification of international cooperation in the social sphere.

40. On the occasion of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General had noted that social development was crucial not only for improving the human condition but also for enhancing economic efficiency and strengthening political democracy. Austria had from the outset supported the initiative of convening a World Summit for Social Development, and it welcomed the fact that special attention would be given to the enhancement of social integration, the alleviation and reduction of poverty and the promotion of productive employment. In view of the political, economic and social changes occurring in many parts of the world, in particular in the countries with economies in transition, the World Summit should elaborate guidelines for Governments that would permit them to address social questions more effectively. Austria was making preparations to establish a national committee for the Summit which would include all relevant segments of society, in particular the non-governmental organizations.

41. One of the most pressing problems currently facing youth was unemployment which, for different reasons, affected developing and developed countries as well as countries with economies in transition. In the developed countries, unemployment damaged the social fabric and contributed to the appearance of phenomena such as intolerance and xenophobia. In the countries with economies in transition, unemployment might seriously impede ongoing reforms. Moreover, as the 1993 Report on the World Social Situation (E/1993/50) indicated, reducing unemployment and raising productivity were essential conditions for eradicating poverty, reducing emigration pressures and mitigating political tensions in developing countries.

42. With that in mind, Austria had established in 1987 the youth employment programme HOPE 87. That programme, financed mainly by the Austrian Federal Government, had established branch offices in several countries and cooperated with international institutions such as the United Nations Educational,

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Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Council of Europe. In March 1992, a memorandum of understanding on the promotion of youth employment through HOPE 87 had been signed between Austria and the United Nations Office at Vienna. To date, HOPE 87 had financed 71 mostly small-scale projects (41 in Africa, 12 in Asia, 10 in Latin America and 8 in European countries). Convinced that better training could ease the access of young people to the labour market, HOPE 87 had also established training courses for young people from countries with economies in transition. In view of the encouraging results produced by the programme, the Austrian Federal Government was prepared to continue financing it.

43. The importance of questions related to ageing would continue to grow. In Austria, as in other European countries, the proportion of people over the age of 65 would continue to increase; according to the Vienna-based Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, that trend was likely to occur even more rapidly in the least developed countries. He recalled General Assembly resolution 46/91 on the Implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing and related activities and the annex to that resolution, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons aimed at guaranteeing the independence, participation, self-fulfilment and dignity of older persons and guaranteeing them access to adequate care. The General Assembly had also adopted, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, a Proclamation on Ageing (resolution 47/5). Pursuant to the appeal of that resolution, Austria had introduced, in April 1993, a reform of the provisions of legal pensions, the main goal of which was to ensure the long-term financing of the pension system by restructuring the adjustment and revaluation of pensions. The Austrian Government had also tried to make the pension scheme more equitable by providing, particularly for women who had stopped working for a certain period of time, an improved pension system that took into account the years devoted to child rearing. Furthermore, the pensions for those who had to retire very early for health reasons would be raised. In July 1993, a Federal Act on Care Allowance had gone into force under which care benefits would be allocated to all persons needing care, including older persons. In view of the fact that the number of people needing care would rise, the Austrian authorities had set priorities for the coming decade, which would allow them to select from various flexible retirement schemes, live independently without being left alone, obtain ambulatory care while fully participating in social life. Those initiatives, in addition to the special attention to be paid to the quality of housing showed that the social policy for older persons in Austria reflected, to a very large extent, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons.

44. The proclamation of 3 December 1993 by the General Assembly as the International Day of Disabled Persons on the occasion of the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, clearly demonstrated the great importance that the United Nations attached to the improvement of the living conditions of the disabled. That importance had been reaffirmed by the World Conference on Human Rights which had devoted a chapter to the rights of the disabled persons in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Conference had called upon the General Assembly to adopt the Standard Rules on

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the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities which had been elaborated at the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna and recommended by the Commission for Social Development.

45. At the national level, Austria had adopted a policy based on the World Programme of Action which sought to guarantee disabled persons an independent life and encourage their participation in economic and social life. For example, it had made substantial efforts to improve the quality of medical care and rehabilitation provided to disabled persons.

46. The international community was aware, in particular, of the family's decisive role as the fundamental unit of society. Austria, for its part, was participating actively in the preparation of the International Year of the Family, had contributed to the Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the Family and was currently financing the post of a social expert working for the secretariat of the United Nations Office at Vienna. Moreover, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (A/48/293), further in-kind contributions had been offered by a number of Austrian citizens and private-sector companies. The report also highlighted the remarkable work done by the Coordinator for the International Year of the Family and his staff despite almost insurmountable budgetary constraints. In that connection, it was regrettable that those constraints had prevented the Coordinator from coming to New York to present the report on the preparations for the International Year of the Family personally. He was to be commended, however, on his effectiveness and professionalism.

47. The preparations launched in Austria for the observance of the International Year of the Family were at an advanced stage. A national committee had been established in Vienna under the auspices of the Federal Minister for Environment, Youth and Family and 15 national working groups had begun to consider various family-related themes: the International Year of the Family would be officially inaugurated on 10 December 1993 at a large-scale conference to be held at the Austria Centre in Vienna, for which the Federal Minister for Environment, Youth and Family had already presented a position paper on the new culture of families in Austria.

48. In conclusion, he welcomed the fact that the Assembly, in resolution 47/237, had decided to proclaim 15 May as the International Day of Families and stressed that his Government hoped the International Year of the Family would provide an occasion for elaborating a declaration on the roles, responsibilities and rights of the family.

49. Miss SAHLI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, despite the climate of harmony and understanding which seemed to prevail in international relations, a good many problems confronting States, particularly socio-economic problems, had not yet been truly resolved. The current world economic situation was not very heartening, particularly in developing countries that had been unable to achieve their social development objectives. Moreover, in many countries, structural adjustment had had very severe social consequences which had affected the most vulnerable and destitute groups and had caused a proliferation of such phenomena as unemployment, poverty, hunger and an increase in the number of economic asylum-seekers and refugees. That, in turn, had stirred up resentment and

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violence, pushed up the crime rate and the number of drug addicts, forced some persons into exile and sparked the rise of new forms of racism, thus jeopardizing the security of the societies affected.

50. It was unacceptable, moreover, that one fourth of the planet's inhabitants, most of whom were in the third world, lived in abject poverty, were victims of hunger and disease and were illiterate, and that three fourths of world income went to 16 per cent of the inhabitants of developed countries. Under such conditions, social development that was both just and durable was impossible. The developed countries must therefore reorient their economic policies and strategies towards encouraging the development of the world economy and thereby promoting social justice: they must cease to engage in discriminatory practices and to impose arbitrary economic and commercial measures on developing countries, which compromised social development and constituted a flagrant attack on freedoms.

51. It was also essential to increase public awareness of social policies, focus greater attention on education and training, which were of crucial importance to social development, continue encouraging citizens to participate in the elaboration and implementation of social policy, and make the most of the Plan of Action for People's Participation in Rural Development, adopted by the 1991 Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

52. Recalling that a great many young people from the third world chose to leave their countries in order to upgrade their living conditions and that crime, drug use and violence, which were essentially due to unemployment and poverty, were very widespread among youth, she stressed that all necessary measures must be taken in order to enable youth to enjoy their rights, hold jobs and make an effective contribution to development. The observance of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year in 1995 should also focus attention on the problems of youth and elicit proposals on how to solve them. She stressed that the programme of action of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, adopted at the Paris Conference, should be implemented.

53. Recalling that her country had been one of the first to draw attention to the problem of disabled persons, advocating, in particular, the proclamation of an International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, she said that the observance in 1992 of the tenth anniversary of the Year had helped to increase awareness among world opinion of the rights and needs of disabled persons. Inviting the international community to integrate disabled persons more fully into society, she also stressed that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons should be maintained and that action should be taken to ensure the full implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

54. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had promulgated a number of laws on disabled persons, had accorded them certain privileges and material advantages (medical care, rehabilitation, jobs, tax exemptions), established a national commission for the disabled, sought to encourage the integration of disabled persons into society, set up centres and institutions for disabled persons in a number of towns and villages and included disabled persons in decision-making.

(Miss Sahli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

55. The elderly, who had given so much to society and therefore deserved respect, comprised a rapidly growing population group, which posed tremendous socio-economic problems for States. The implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which would end in 2002 and whose goal was to ensure the protection and well-being of the elderly, was therefore vital.

56. The family - the fundamental unit of all societies, which provided all sorts of social services and which could, if it were cohesive, remedy scores of social problems - was, in many countries, particularly the developing countries, racked by all kinds of tensions brought on by the deterioration of socio-economic conditions that put it severely to the test and at times caused its break-up. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya therefore believed that, to begin with, a long-term specifically family-oriented strategy should be elaborated during the International Year of the Family in 1994. It also supported the idea of issuing an international declaration on the role, responsibilities and rights of the family and believed that the recommendations contained in the Declaration issued at the close of the preparatory meeting for the International Year of the Family held at Tunis should be taken into account. At the national level, it had established a national preparatory commission for the International Year of the Family.

57. Her delegation noted that, as it had in the past, the United Nations played a pioneering role and put forward many proposals that were subsequently adopted by the international community and then incorporated into national legislation. She also stressed that the conferences and other events that would take place in 1994 and 1995 would provide an opportunity to evaluate objectively the results achieved and analyse rationally the factors that had impeded the implementation of social development plans and strategies. She hoped, in particular, that the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, on which she pinned great hope, would be able to lay the groundwork for durable social development that would support States' efforts to respond to their inhabitants' social needs and remedy the social ills afflicting the planet by according priority to the attainment of the objectives contained in the declarations. Lastly, she stressed that the United Nations should contribute more actively to modifying the negative trends that were becoming apparent in the world by more precisely evaluating and targetting its studies of such trends with a view to the concrete and objective treatment of the problems that would arise in the years to come. She hoped that the restructuring of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs would enable the United Nations to play an effective role in the field of social development.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.